

# Conger: 'Man Who Beat Nurmi'

By JOE GRATA

For the past 25 years, many thousand feet of movie film have ground through the cameras of Ray Conger as the 57-year-old professor of physical education has photographed State football games.

This afternoon Conger will be at his usual post—the third floor of the press box—adjusting lenses to focus the action between Syracuse and the Lions. Since starting the task in 1937, Conger has retained the accurate eyes, steady hands and personal touch that rank him as one of the best grid photographers in the nation.

But few students recognize Conger on campus; maybe several alumni recall the name. Still probably even less remember the remarkable feats that Conger performed as an Iowa State track star near the first-quarter mark of the 20th century.

At the 1929 Millrose Games, for instance, Conger became the first and only American runner ever to beat the great Paavo Nurmi in the mile race.

ACTUALLY, it's somewhat embarrassing to the quiet, pipe-smoking Conger when he's still introduced as "the man who beat Nurmi."

"In the first place, Conger explains, "when I performed the feat, Nurmi had pretty well limited himself to two-mile races. And in the second place, only died-in-the-wool track fans remember Nurmi."

For those who don't remember, Conger has the scalps of many

other great distance runners besides Nurmi's — Lloyd Hahn, Gene Venzke, Leon Lermond, Swedish star Ed Wide and Dr. Otto Peltzer, the German ace.

Conger claims his record-smashing victory over Hahn in the 1926 Kansas City "1000" as the top achievement of his career. The race (run in 2:11 minutes) propelled Conger into national prominence and started him on the road to the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam.

Other Conger feats were victory over Lermond and Venzke in the special mile event of the first Penn Relays, undefeated seasons as a miler in 1929-30 and 1930-31, and winner of three national A.A.U. mile and three national A.A.U. 1000-yard titles before hanging up his spikes in 1932.

STUDENTS BEST know Conger as the instructor of the sport lecture classes at Rec Hall. In this "required" section of the physical education program, he introduces students to the fundamentals of most sports.

Despite his schedule, Conger still manages to marvel at "these fantastic young runners of today."

"We old birds couldn't have held a candle to today's runners," Conger laughs. "I realize that tracks, equipment and so-forth have improved, but essentially these fellows work harder. Why, I see where some of the top Australians run up of 100 miles in a week. I doubt whether I ever ran 100 miles in a month."

Maybe he's being too sincere, because for Ray Conger the difference between good and great was a little extra effort.



Then ...

Ray Conger



and Now



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